

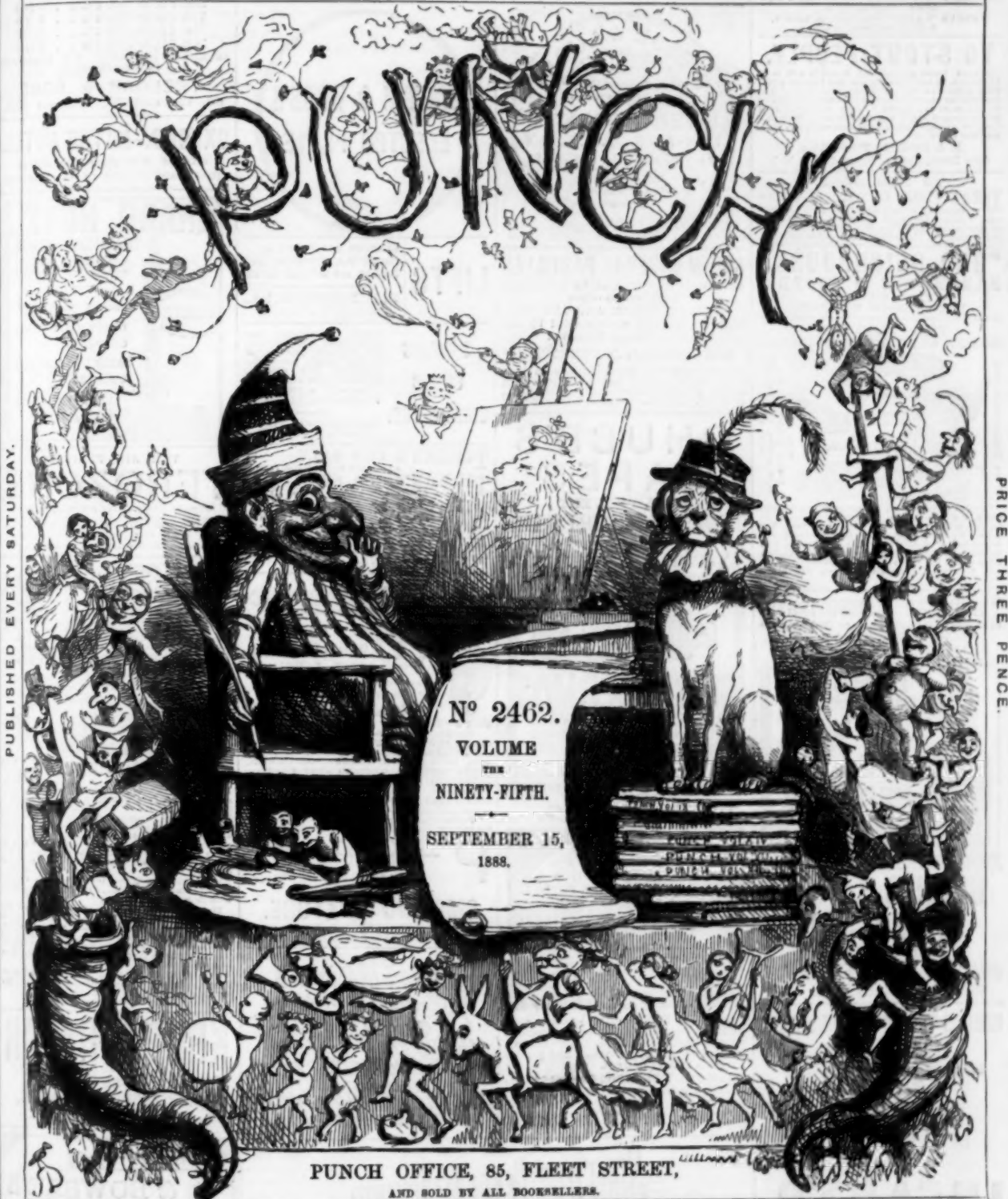
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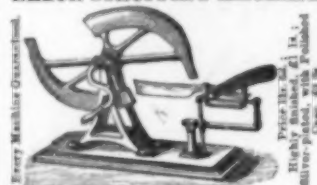
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A NATIONAL MUDDLE; OR, THE INVENTOR AVENGED.

(Government Drama in Active Rehearsal.)

ACT I.—A Room in the Permanent Sleepy Department. Half-awake Official discovered dozing at desk. Enter a Sanguine Inventor.

Half-awake Official (rousing himself). Ah! Mr. What's-your-name? Come about that new gun of yours, eh?

Sanguine Inventor. Yes, and this is the twenty-fifth time I've called about it. Surely, the Authorities can make up their minds. Come: what do they mean to do about it?

H. O. Well, you see it was to carry twenty miles—?

S. I. Yes, and go through thirty-six inches of steel plating.

H. O. Just so. Well, come, you know, that's too much for us. We don't care about such distances and figures.

S. I. "Don't care?" I don't understand you. Why, it's an entirely new departure!

H. O. Yes, but this Department doesn't care about new departures. It sticks to the old lines.

S. I. But the army that first adopts my gun, will revolutionise all the conditions of warfare.

H. O. That's just why the Department wouldn't touch it. It doesn't want to revolutionise anything. It has got its own principles and ideas to work out, and it has quite enough to do to keep pace with them, I can tell you.

S. I. Will you purchase it, or not? You shall have it for £1000.

H. O. Quite out of the question at that figure. But the fact is, we don't want it at any price. You had better take it elsewhere.

S. I. As you will. I shall certainly take it—to the Continent.

H. O. So do. And now good morning.

[Bows him out, and falls asleep, while Sanguine Inventor proceeds to carry out his threat as Act Drop descends.]

ACT II.—Tableau, representing an interval of ten years, during which Sanguine Inventor applies to the Foreign European Governments, and disposes of his invention to several of them on highly advantageous terms. His new gun being pronounced on all hands the "weapon of the future," its merits are freely discussed in scientific Continental military circles; and the rumour of its various excellences at length reaching the Officials of the Permanent Sleepy Department, they lethargically appoint a Committee of Inquiry to investigate its merits, as the Act Drop descends.

ACT III.—A Room in the Permanent Sleepy Department. Half-awake Official discovered, engaged in an interview with The Representative of the Firm of Messrs. MIDDLEMAN & CO.

Half-awake Official. You see, there is a public clamour got up about the gun, and so, I suppose, we must have it. What's your figure?

The Representative of Messrs. Middleman. A million and a half; not a penny under.

H. O. Oh! but come, that's sticking it on rather too stiff. Why, ten years ago we could have had it for £1000!

The R. of M. M. Very possibly. And you were great fools not to purchase at the price. But we have since managed to secure the patent for a pretty penny, and you don't think we are going to do business without making a tidy profit? A million and a half is our lowest figure. So you may like it or leave it, just as you choose.

H. O. If it wasn't for the clamour, we would soon let you know which we would do. However, we've no choice; so, I suppose, you must have your price.

[Proceeds to make arrangements for the payment of the purchase-money for a ten-years' old invention as the Act Drop descends.]

ACT IV.—Tableau representing the Sanguine Inventor, who has now patented a Gun that will carry forty miles, and penetrate 6 feet of steel plating, offering its refusal to the Permanent Sleepy Department. He has an interview with the Half-awake Official, who, informing him that the Department has just paid a million and a half for his previous invention, points out that they are not prepared to negotiate any further for the purchase of any improvements. The Sanguine Inventor thereupon straightway disposes of his new secret to further Foreign European Governments, who, adopting it with enthusiasm, utilise it with the greatest success, as the Act Drop descends.

ACT V.—Represents the Interior of the Permanent Sleepy Department after the Declaration of War by several Continental Powers, one of the Sanguine Inventor's Patent Shells fired by the Enemy having just blown the entire Office into the air. The Half-awake Official is discovered slowly emerging from the debris.

Half-awake Official (rubbing his eyes). Dear me, this is very awkward. I suppose we ought to have purchased that fellow's invention, after all. However (coming forward), if our kind friends in front are only satisfied, we can't deny that we have brought about a precious "National Muddle!"

Sanguine Inventor (taking his hand). And have seen the Sanguine Inventor at last "avenged." [They embrace as the Curtain falls.]

OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

CAPITAL number of the *Fortnightly*; that is, as much as I've read of it. "Imprisonment for Debt," by Judge CHALMERS, should be



"Where was the Baron when the light went out?"

studied by everyone who wants to get into debt and keep himself out of prison. I gather from this article that imprisonment for debt isn't quite the pleasantest way of spending a few days in a recess. But in his next, perhaps, Judge CHALMERS will tell us exactly how the prisoners are treated? Why should not a caged prisoner, who can but won't pay, be made

to pay, by setting him to some work which will bring in sufficient money to satisfy the creditor and the expenses of his detention?

The literary critic who writes so trenchantly on the *Fall of Fiction*, in the same number, ought by this time to have read *Rhedah's Revenge*, wherein I finished off the mighty RITERAGGARD himself with the stock-in-trade of his entertainment. Let Mr. RIDER HAGGARD get a new set of puppets, and learn some fresh tunes on his pipe to which they can dance.

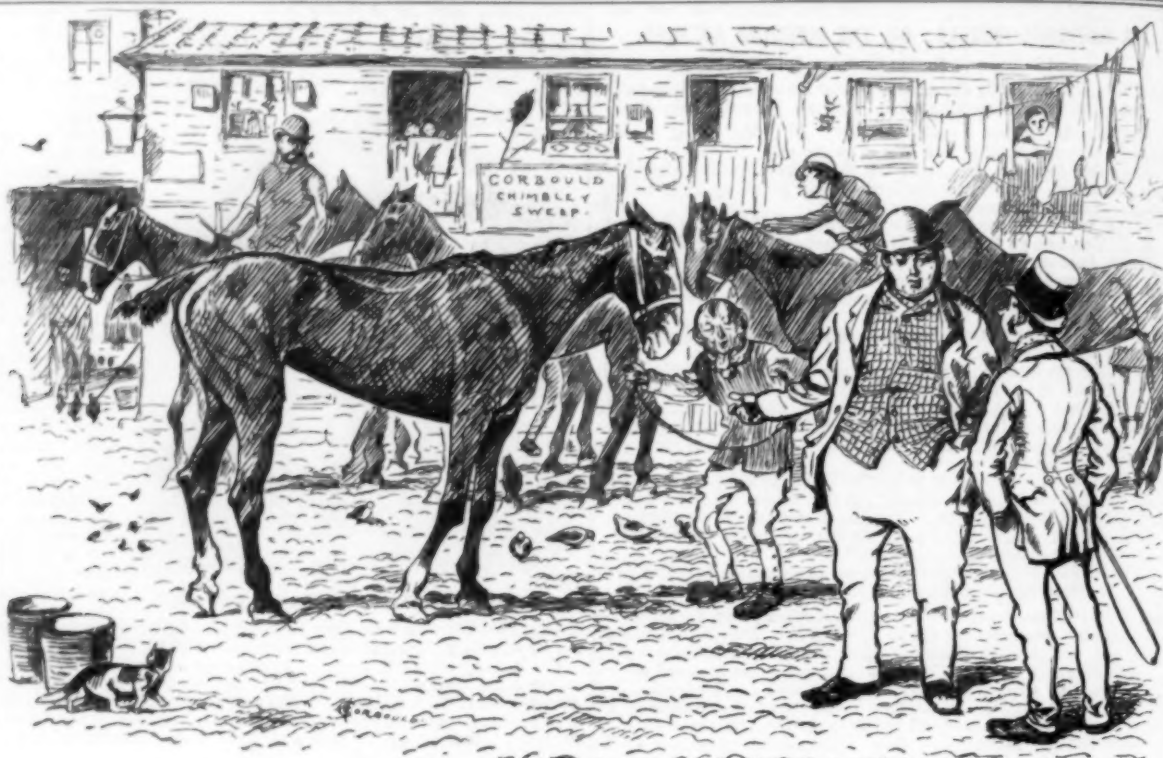
Before changing the subject, I may mention that one of "The Friendlies" informs me that, in *Rhedah's Revenge*, I was wrong in making "Rhinoeri" the plural of Rhinoceros. I thought I was. I ought to have written, as he says, "Rhinocerotes," or "Rhinoceroses;" but then, you see, it occurred to me that "Rhinoeri," having no existence, were just the very animals that RIDER HAGGARD would have pledged his veracity as a Romancer that his mighty hunters had shot. When I come across such solemn affidavits, "I say pooh-pooh to him," and my nose, having in it more of the antique Roman than the Greek, becomes "rhinocerial." (For which word, see Dixon's Johnsonary Lathomised.)

The four volumes of *Weird Tales* have continued to delight me. There's one by Mr. EDMUND YATES, called *The Skeleton in the House*, written, a foot-note confidentially informs us, "while he was still in his twenties,"—which sounds like the British Workman "coming in his thousands." First-rate vintage "The Twenties,"—wish I had a lot of them; and this weird tale of *Moi Meme's* is so nicely told, and with such conviction, that I am heartily sorry he has seen only one ghost in his life. Or perhaps he has seen a lot of them, and won't tell. Please E. Y. give us another ghost, there's a good haunted man, do! I've tried all sorts of spirits without effect. Nowadays I am trying to get one skeleton at all events into my house by conjurations of ANDREW CLARKE, ROOSE, THOMPSON, and BANTING, by spells of dry toast, no butter, no white of eggs, no sugar, no starch (great deprivation this—I was so fond of shirt-fronts fresh from the wash—quite a glutton at them), no fat, no potatoes, no pudding, no sweets, no nothing in fact, and yet the skeleton still weighs fourteen stone with the flesh on. Would fright do it? I shall go on with these *Weird Tales*—one every night at bedtime—and then, "Out, out, brief candle!" and under the clothes disappears the head of the

BEAVE BARON DE BOOK WORMS.

ADVERTISEMENT GRATIS.

A PROPOS of some allusion to *Pepita*, now playing at TOOLE'S Theatre, we have received a letter purporting to be written by one of the Managers of this Operatic Company, informing us that "The B. P. know"—what, he doesn't say—"and" (we quote *verbatim*) "their verdict is taken, not a silly paper, and, I am glad to say, we refuse money nightly." Very magnanimous conduct on the part of "We." Refuse money nightly! We wish we—"nous autres"—had the chance. Would we avail ourselves of it? Ahem! Well, we must at once visit TOOLE'S, and, *pro forma*, tender our coin? Will it be refused? or, shall we be let in? And if the latter, shall we be let in for something good? *Nous verrons, "nous autres."*



GENEROUS OFFER.

Buyer (who having had a legacy of £30, invests in 6 acres for Cab-proprietor's business). "YOU MIGHT GIVE US A SOVEREIGN FOR LUCK; I'VE DONE FAIRISH BUSINESS."
Seller. "WELL, I CAN'T DO THAT. TELL YER WHAT THOUGH, I'LL CHUCK YER THIS OTHER 'OSS IN."

THE DIARY OF A NOBODY.

August 22.—Home sweet Home again. CARRIE bought some pretty blue wool mats to stand vases on. FRIPPA, JANUS & Co. write to say they are sorry they have no vacancy among their staff of clerks for LUPIN.

Aug. 23.—I bought a pair of stage-heads made of Plaster of Paris and coloured brown. They will look just the thing for our little hall and give it style; the heads are excellent imitations. POOLERS AND SMITH are sorry they have nothing to offer LUPIN.

Aug. 24.—Simply to please LUPIN, and make things cheerful for him, as he is a little down, CARRIE invited Mrs. JAMES to come up from Sutton and spend two or three days with us. We have not said a word to LUPIN, but mean to keep it as a surprise.

Aug. 25.—Mrs. JAMES arrived in the afternoon, bringing with her an enormous bunch of wild-flowers. The more I see of Mrs. JAMES the nicer I think she is, and she is devoted to CARRIE. She went into CARRIE's room to take off her bonnet and remained there nearly an hour talking about dress. LUPIN said he was not a bit surprised at Mrs. JAMES's visit, but was surprised at her.

Aug. 26, Sunday.—Nearly late for church, Mrs. JAMES having talked considerably about what to wear all the morning. LUPIN does not seem to get on very well with Mrs. JAMES. I am afraid we shall have some trouble with our next-door neighbours who came in last Wednesday. Several of their friends, who drive up in dog-carts, have already made themselves objectionable. An evening or two ago I had put on a white waistcoat for coolness, and while walking past with my thumbs in my waistcoat pockets (a habit I have), one man, seated in the cart, and looking like an American, commenced singing some vulgar nonsense about, "I had thirteen dollars in my waistcoat pocket." I fancied it was meant for me, and my suspicions were confirmed; for, while walking round the garden in my tall hat this afternoon a "throw-down" cracker was deliberately aimed at my hat and exploded on it like a percussion cap. I turned sharply, and am positive I saw the man who was in the cart retreating from one of the bed-room windows.

Aug. 27.—CARRIE and Mrs. JAMES went off shopping, and had not returned when I came back from the office. Judging from the sub-

sequent conversation, I am afraid Mrs. JAMES is filling CARRIE's head with a lot of nonsense about dress. I walked over to GOWING's, and asked him to drop in to supper, and make things pleasant. CARRIE prepared a little extemporised supper, consisting of the remainder of the cold joint, a small piece of salmon (which I was to refuse, in case there was not enough to go round), and a blanc-mange and custards. There was also a decanter of port and some jam puffs on the side-board. Mrs. JAMES made us play rather a good game with cards, called "Muggins." To my surprise—in fact, disgust—LUPIN got up in the middle, and in a most sarcastic tone said, "Pardon me, this sort of thing is too fast for me. I shall go and enjoy a quiet game of marbles in the back garden." Things might have become rather disagreeable but for GOWING (who seems to have taken to LUPIN) suggesting they should invent games. LUPIN said, "Let's play Monkeys." He then led GOWING all round the room, and brought him in front of the looking-glass. I must confess I laughed heartily at this. I was a little vexed at everybody subsequently laughing at some joke which they did not explain, and it was only on going to bed I discovered I must have been walking about all the evening with an antimaccassar on one button of my coat-tails.

Aug. 28.—Found a large brick in the middle bed of geraniums, evidently come from next door. PATTLES AND PATTLES can't find a place for LUPIN.

Aug. 29.—Mrs. JAMES is making a positive fool of CARRIE. CARRIE appeared in a new dress like a smock-frock. She said "Smocking" was all the rage. I replied it put me in a rage. She also had on a hat as big as a kitchen coal-scuttle, and the same shape. Mrs. JAMES went home, and both LUPIN and I were somewhat pleased—the first time we have agreed on a single subject since his return. MERKINS AND SON write they have no vacancy for LUPIN.

Motto for the Gaiety Adapters of "She."

"If we do prove him Haggard,
 Though that his Jesses were our dear heart-strings,
 We'd whistle him off."

(Joe Knight's Shakespeare, Revised Version. Othello, Act III., sc. 3.)



DERISION.

Bagndige (to his Friend's Keeper). "TUT-T-T-T—DEAR ME! WOODRUFF, I'M AFRAID I'VE SHOT THAT DOG
Keeper. "OH NO, SIR, I THINK HE'S ALL RIGHT, SIR. HE MOSTLY DROP DOWN LIKE THAT IF ANYBODY MISSES!!"

BEAUTIFUL TAR.

SONG OF AN ENTHUSIASTIC SCIENTIST.

AIR—"Beautiful Star."

BEAUTIFUL Tar, the outcome bright
Of the black coal and the yellow gas-light,
Of modern products most wondrous far,
Tar of the gas-works, beautiful Tar!
Tar of the Gas-works, &c.

In fancy's ear thou seem'st to say,
"Follow me close, I am bound to pay.
On me experiments freely try;
For if there's a *multum in parvo*, 'tis I."
Tar of the Gas-works, &c.

Men told us once, with a cheek quite calm,
Of the things that the Arabs could get from
the palm;
But that fraud botanic is distanced far
By the modern marvel, the black Coal-tar.
Tar of the Gas-works, &c.

House and garments, victuals and drink,
The nomad got from the palm, I think;
But as source of beauty, and bliss, and balm,
Coal-tar from the palm-tree must bear the
palm. Tar of the Gas-works, &c.

Protoplasm? Oh, that's played out;
The true protoplasm is Tar, no doubt.
As "promise and potency" Tar must take
What vulgar sciolists call "the cake."
Tar of the Gas-works, &c.

There's hardly a thing that a man may name
Of use or beauty in life's small game,

But you can extract in alembic or jar
From the "physical basis" of black Coal-tar.
Tar of the Gas-works, &c.

Oil, and ointment, and wax, and wine,
And the lovely colours called aniline;
You can make *anything*, from a salve to a
star,
If you only know how to, from black Coal-
tar. Tar of the Gas-works, &c.

'Tis found the basis of all things sweet;
Sugar is settled, and beet is beat;
The western root and the eastern cane
With ubiquitous Coal-tar contend in vain.
Tar of the Gas-works, &c.

You can carry the stuff in your pocket or
hat,
And it will not hurt you, or make you fat;
Of saccharine matters the wholesomest far
Is the stuff extracted from black Coal-tar,
Tar of the Gas-works, &c.

The very bees mistake it for honey!
'Tis a fount of pleasure, a mine of money;
And the Bounty question without a jar
Will soon be settled by black Coal-tar,
Tar of the Gas-works, &c.

Triumph, O Tar! Stuff half divine!
The world's whole interests soon will twine
Around thine essence the subtlest far,
Tar of the Gas-works, black Coal-tar—
Tar of the Gas-works, black Coal-tar!

A PERSON OF LIGHT AND LEADING.—Will o'
the Wisp.

NOUS AT NEWNHAM.

(By a "Babbler in the Land.")

[Miss HELEN GLADSTONE says that when she
was a student at Newnham, a motion was brought
before the Debating Society there, and carried by
a large majority, that life without gossip was not
worth living.]

EXCELLENT, Miss HELEN GLADSTONE!
That is not the frump or "fad's" tone.
Girlhood without Gossip? Dreadful!
Fancy FANNY with a head full
Of *on dits* and tittle-tattle
Sworn against all pretty prattle!
Vowed to theorems and theses!
No, the little talking teases
Could not care for Mind or Matter,
Art or Science, without Chatter.
Mr. Punch, though gabbling ead you
hate,

You'll applaud the "sweet girl graduate"
Who, howe'er chockfull of knowledge
Holds that girlhood, e'en at College,
Still may without blame or loss sip
Talk's essential nectar—Gossip,
Only scorned by peevish quizzdom;
For as Wit to heavy Wisdom,
Banter gay to bitter brooding,
Soufflé light to suet pudding,
So is Gossip bright and blameless,
As unspiteful as 'tis aimless,
To the heavy altercation
Pompous prigs call Conversation!
Life without it worth the candle?
No, dear Punch. Dull spite and scandal
Very properly you tackle,
But you will not "cut the cackle."

DUE NORTH.

*Tower—Obstruction—Berths—Problem—Information—Weather—
Passengers—Steward—Picturesque—Uncertainties.*

To the Tower—in a cab! Visions of CRUIKSHANK, HARRISON AINSWORTH, *Maugher of the Axe*, *Xu*, the Giants, the Torture-room, *Cicely* being dragged down-stairs, and *Mephistophelian Simon Renard*. Suppose a shell or two would knock the old place all to smithereens,—to W. H. Smithereens,—*à propos* of HARRISON AINS-



"We're going to have a very fine Passage!"

WORTH. The Tower is not a *Tour de force*. Down a dirty lane occupied by vans, carts, and crowds of men,—dockyard labourers waiting for work towards St. Katherine's wharf. Glad to know that I have arrived half an hour before the boat starts, as, if an intending passenger were at all late, and if there were but one waggon more in this dirty narrow lane, and one cab coming up the street when mine is going down, to reach the wharf itself in time to catch the boat would be simply impossible. Not a policeman visible, no official of any sort at hand to regulate the traffic and clear a way to and from the point of departure. How the exports and imports ever get out of these narrow thoroughfares without smashing and jamming, and loss of life, or damage to limb, and how the passengers—especially the female passengers—for the various steamboats ever reach their destination in safety is a marvel to me.

Happy Thought.—Yet this stoppage of traffic is appropriate to the locality. The Tower and "the block!"

I meet Honson at the entrance to the wharf. He assures me, as his dear friend, that he is as annoyed as I am about the obstruction, and especially annoyed on *my* account. "But look here!" he exclaims abruptly, adroitly changing the subject, "we've got the best berths in the ship!" and he leads the way to the steamer, almost skipping with delight at his own craftiness in securing these exceptional berths.

Happy Thought.—The Skipper and his craft.

We have: so much is evident: but two other passengers are to occupy the two other berths in the same cabin.

"Perhaps they won't come," I say, with a glimmer of hope, and relying on the probable obstacles in the narrow approach.

"They're here already," says Honson, with an air of genial hospitality, pointing out their overcoats and bags, which I thought were his own.

"I've taken the two upper berths," continues Honson, still congratulating himself on his acuteness. "Plenty of air, you see"—here he opens the port-hole—"and the other chaps are very quiet fellows. I've seen them. It will be all right. I'm sure you'll like it."

"Shall I?" I return, doubtfully looking at my berth, which is as

high up and about as roomy as the top shelf of the linen-cupboard in an old-fashioned housekeeper's room.

Problem. How to get there? Not being a bird, I can't fly up. Not being a gymnast, I can't jump up. If there's no ladder, I must evidently climb up. I mention "ladder" to one of the officials of the steamer who looks in at the cabin casually,—ship's officers I think they're called,—and ship's officer only laughs and goes away again. Clearly a ladder is out of the question; it certainly was out of the answer, as far as the merry but uncommunicative ship's officer is concerned. Consequently, as I put it to Honson (who can get into his own berth as easily as possible by merely stepping on to the top of the fixed washing-stand when closed, and crawling in at the foot of the bed), the problem develops itself into two parts. *First:* How to climb without grazing my knees and doing myself some serious internal injury from the effects of which I may never recover. *Secondly:* How to climb up without considerably inconveniencing the man on the shelf below, by kicking him on the head, stamping on his nose, putting my foot on his mouth, or otherwise so alarming him, that, if asleep, he may wake suddenly, forget where he is, think that I am a burglar, and incontinently seize me by the leg and bring me down to the floor, when, unless I am stunned and with both arms and legs broken, there must ensue a combat of two in which the other couple must inevitably join.

"You'll find it very comfortable," says Honson; "the ship is lighted by electricity,"—as if this would help me to climb up into my jam-cupboard shelf, or send me to sleep when I get there,—and the whole place is deliciously clean and comfortable. Let's go on deck," he says, in a persuasive voice, and I follow him as he skips up the companion.

We come upon a communicative passenger, who seems to be an acquaintance of Honson's. He informs us that, "This isn't the Company's new boat. The new boat's much better than this."

"This is a very good boat," protests Honson, as if it were his own.

"Oh, she's good enough, and fast enough," says the communicative acquaintance; "but she's old. She's fast, though," he repeats, as if being "old and fast" were a recommendation to anybody.

"Ah! she's a first-rate vessel," says Honson, standing to his guns, on my account, I am sure, otherwise, I fancy, he would agree with his communicative acquaintance.

The latter continues, "She's still a good seagoing boat," resumes the communicative acquaintance, "but she's no breadth of beam. She'll roll"—[will she, O dear!]"—she'll roll, if there's any sea on," he repeats, emphatically, as if he were drawing our attention to an inspired prophecy, "she'll roll."

Honson observes with equal certainty, "But there will be no sea on." All on my account, I'm sure. I'm afraid his forecast would honestly be in favour of there being "a sea on."

"You should have gone by the new boat," says his acquaintance. I cannot help asking him how it is that if the new boat is so perfect, he himself, didn't go by it?

"I am going by it, next Saturday," he replies, "I'm only here to see a friend off." And time being up, he bids us good-bye, and in another ten minutes he is on the quay, waving his hat, and pitying us.

Observing me somewhat depressed by this information, Honson is careful to assure me that, in his opinion, we shall have a capital passage. True, we are beginning well; but then this is only the river; dirty, but interesting. We have a considerable number of passengers. There are three horse-artillerymen, with swords and spurs, who seem rather out of place on board. There are a few persons, young men and young women, with sticks, rugs, water-proofs, umbrellas, maps, guide-books, and hand-bags; a reserved person in an ulster, with opera-glasses; and three awkward youths of the superior 'Arry type, two of whom are in a state of perpetual admiration of the third, who is a repulsively larkly young fellow, in a yachting cap, a dirty-looking flannel shirt, false collar, and probably false cuffs, with a crimson tie, evidently their leader and model in waggery; a staid and very stout old Darby and Joan, who seem glued to their seats, and nudge one another from time to time when they are passing anything that seems to either of them worthy of notice; these, with a few more middle-aged quiet couples, a very English-looking person deeply interested in a French novel with the familiar yellow cover, and a High Church clergyman with a moustache, represent the tourist element. All the others, both fore and aft, seem to be attired in the ordinary top-hat and black coat of London respectability, as if they had strolled down to the wharf, come on board by merest accident, and been carried off before they knew where they were.

Most of these persons at once contract with the Steward for their meals at so much a head for the voyage, and, should the weather prove favourable, they take twice of everything on principle. On a rough passage I suppose the Steward has the best of the bargain. And he certainly plays his cards well, as the time fixed for the dinner on board is two o'clock, just as the ship is off Southend, when bidding farewell to the river, we enter on the real sea-passage.

Happy Thought.—If you want to know what sort of passage it is going to be, ascertain the number of passengers contracting at so

much a head for their meals, and then watch the Steward's face after Erith. If you see the Steward smiling, beware,—if he chuckles and rubs his hands gleefully, prepare for squalls—and if he laughs outright, disappear to your berth, and make such arrangements as your past experience may suggest.

Hobson is a capital companion. He is most anxious that nothing should even have the appearance of any likelihood to go wrong. He never attempts forced jollity, but, naturally enthusiastic, he has cultivated enthusiasm; and naturally sympathetic, he has cultivated the art of sympathising. I confess to being very soon depressed, especially with the probability of nasty weather in view.

The sky appears lowering.

"We shall have a storm, I think," is my melancholy foreboding.

"Oh, no," replies Hobson, cheerily. "That dark appearance is due to London smoke." And then he dilates on the subjects of smoke consumption, fogs, chimneys, gas, storage of force, and so forth. In the meantime, I am watching the clouds.

"It's raining, I think," I say, not liking to be certain, and still hoping against hope, as I see the marks of heavy drops falling, as if nails had been driven into the deck at equal distances.

"Rain!" exclaims Hobson, putting on his glasses, and looking about him with an air of the utmost incredulity at the bare idea of the possibility of such a thing. "Rain? No. I think it's the spray from the engine." And he looks round with a chirpy and perfectly satisfied smile (being much pleased with his own ingenious explanation), just as a heavy rain-drop as big as a pea hits him sharply on the tip of his nose. He looks up with an expression of childlike surprise, as if this were some part in a funny juvenile game, and he had to turn round twice and find out who had touched him on the nose.

"There's more where that came from," I say, seizing the campstool and making for cover under the awning. There is: it comes down heavily.

He follows me with his campstool, and his waterproof buttoned up—for in spite of the sanguine tone of his consolation to others, he himself is never without a handy and really serviceable Mackintosh—and looking round on the people all huddled together like sheep in a storm, he says beamingly, as if he took rather a pride in this down-pour, "Ah! that's something like a shower!"

Then he continues:—

"You'll see, this will clear the air; it's just what was wanted—not by us," he puts in, finely anticipating the general objection, "but by the atmosphere, and it will be for our benefit, as we shall have a lovely passage. Wind S. by S.W.!" he exclaims, in an ecstasy of delight, turning in that direction; "couldn't be better, dear friend; couldn't be better!"

"The rain makes the deck so sloppy; that's the worst of it," I grumble.

"That is the worst of it," returns Hobson, triumphantly; "I quite agree with you, that is the worst of it; but there's no mud, as there would be ashore, and in five minutes the sun will come out and the Captain will send a man with a mop, and the deck will be as dry as a bone. Look, it's stopped now. And there's a dry place right in the middle of the vessel, where you will scarcely feel motion at all."

We enjoy sunshine for a while. But the wily man with the mop does not make his appearance as the clouds are once more gathering.

"Looks threatening," I observe; and I mean it.

"Oh, no," Hobson replies, rubbing his hands gleefully; "when it begins like this, it's always fine afterwards."

"Rather misty," I say, pointing ahead to a dense grey mist into which we are rapidly steaming.

"Yes, rather misty," he returns, for the fact is undeniable; but as he has a good word even for a river-fog, he at once adds cheerfully, "But what a wonderful effect! Look at that boat emerging from the mist like a spectre!"

"Subject for Mistle,—I mean WHISTLER," I observe, gloomily.

"Exactly, dear friend, exactly," he replies, delighted to find me willing to enter into his artistic views of this arrangement in fog and smoke. Then he points towards the dense mass of grey vapour which we are now approaching, and exclaims, "Look!" After which he throws back his head and folds his arms with the air of a connoisseur regarding some great masterpiece of Art, and says, "There! There are wonderful effects! Wonderful! wonderful!" And, as a wandering black barge slowly emerges from the fog, he repeats to himself, *sotto voce*, "Wonderful! Beautiful!" in a subdued tone of the most intense admiration. His tone of unqualified approbation reminds me of the old Herr Von JOEL, who used to go about at PADDY GREEN'S selling twopenny cigars for sixpence apiece, and exclaiming, "Pewtiful! Pewtiful!" Then, as the clouds gather thicker and thicker, and the fog becomes more and more dense, he turns towards me, smiling brightly, and says with an air of conviction that deceives nobody, "Ah! dear friend, we shall have a very fine passage."

Hardly are the words out of his mouth than down comes the rain in bucketful. "Thunder," as the stage-directions have it, "is heard

in the distance, and the scene is illuminated with vivid flashes of lightning." We descend below.

"If it's going on like this—" I begin, grumbling.

"It won't," Hobson assures me. "The effects of this storm will be to make the sea perfectly calm, and with the wind in a rather rainy quarter, we shall have a splendid passage. You'll see. It will be beautiful! beautiful! You won't feel even a qualm."

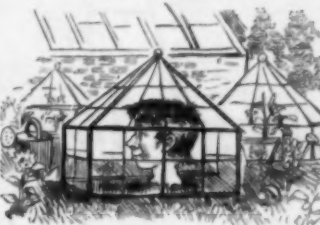
And if I did, he would tell me that the qualm I felt was the best qualm in the world, and that a calm would follow on a qualm, and then, if I were very unwell, he would prove to me scientifically that nothing could be more beneficial to my general health than this short sharp attack of *mal de mer*.

We are steaming down the Thames, with every now and then a stoppage (the signal "Stop her!" being given by a sharp bell and a gruff voice, as it appears to me,—a similar method being used to indicate "Go ahead again!"), in order to allow time for various huge unwieldy barges,—laden or empty, which are generally in charge of an inadequate crew, consisting of a dirty man clinging to a prodigiously long pole, with which he is stirring up the mud, a barking dog very angry with our steamer, and an unkempt indolent boy,—to get out of our way and save themselves from being run down or swamped; and we are rapidly passing landmarks familiar to Londoners who dine at Greenwich, and many more quite unfamiliar even to them. I am beginning to feel hungry. Good or bad sign? "First-rate sign, dear friend," replies Hobson, enthusiastically. "First-rate! Shows it's agreeing with you." Glad to hear it, but I have my doubts.

OVENLY!

A CORRESPONDENT, signing himself

"A HAUGHTY CULTURIST," sends us this cutting from *The Garden*, which we at once proceed to plant within our own borders:—



IMPROVER.—A lady highly recommends a youth, age 17; three years' good general experience under glass in her garden.

Three years under glass! The lady doesn't mention his height, nor his temperament, which must be somewhat of a hot nature associated with

Bedded Out; or, "Cometh up as a Flower!" the Sunny South.

THE SYSTEM.

"Lord CHARLES BERRSFORD says, indeed, that the fault is not theirs, but that of the system."—*Times*.

WHAT is it, when the Country facts appal,
And men for explanation loudly call,
Delays, impedes, and paralyses all?

The System!

What is it makes our training course effete,
And leaves us, should a foreign foe we meet,
To face him with a makeshift patched-up fleet?

The System!

What, spite the ample millions it obtains,
The public clamour scornfully disdains,
And takes good care the Navy nothing gains?

The System!

What is it hoards up useless stores by tons,
What falsifies on measured mile the runs,
And turns out fighting ships without their guns?

The System!

And what, if peace to war by chance give place,
And bring us and our dangers face to face,
Would launch on us a national diagrae?

The System!

So what should Englishmen, without a doubt,
While yet they've time to know what they're about,
Destroy, tread under foot, smash, trample out?

The System!

"HOMBURGING THEM."—Last season H.R.H. the Prince of WALES found that all the American Dudes at Homburg were sincerely flattering him by closely imitating his costume, whatever it might be. But a genuinely happy thought occurred to H.R.H. He arrayed himself, so the *Liverpool Post* informs us, in hideous attire, the like of which was never seen in Tweed or out of it. The Dudes were done, and H.R.H. bears the distinguished title of the Prince of Wiles.



OUT OF TOWN.

(UNFASHIONABLE INTELLIGENCE.)

Visitor. "WHAT A ROARING TRADE THE HOTELS WILL BE DOING, WITH ALL THESE HOLIDAY FOLK!"

Head Waiter at The George. "LOE BLESS YER, SIR, NO! THEY ALL BRING THEIR NOSEBAGS WITH 'EM!"

THE "IRREPRESSIBLE CHINEE"!

(An expansion and new application of the neatest of American Nursery Rhymes.)

PING-WING, the Pieman's Son,
Was a troublesome chap from far Canton.
Wander he would, and wherever he went
He raised up ructions and discontent.
Like little AH SID, with his "yukakan!"
He "velly much bothered um Melican man."

PING-WING, like little AH SID,
Was a cute little yellow-faced Chinese kid;
And, like his compatriot, sly AH SIN,
He had tricks that are dark and an eye to the tin:

To scrape and store it afar he'd roam,
But he always wanted to spend it at home.

PING-WING he could "terribly toil,"
A sleek-faced slave—till he'd sacked the spoil.
Then PING-WING, the Pieman's Son,
Would hook it homeward to far Canton,
And live in comfort and cut a dash
At the West's expense with the West's hard cash.

PING-WING, with his saffron face,
Played it rather low down on the Western race;
For he worked so cheap and he worked so quick,
And never resented the snub or kick;
And the West conceived it could play and rest

Whilst PING-WING worked for it. Innocent West!

PING-WING he would wash and scrub,
Whilst the Western male abhors the tub,
He would slave and save, and live upon rice,
Which to Western molars is not so nice.
So the wise West chortled, and argued thus:—
"This yaller Nigger's a useful cuss!"

But the Western wisecracks didn't quite see
The whole of the game of the Heathen Chinese;
And when they twigged PING-WING his plan,
It fearfully flustered the "Melican man,"
And raised no end of a hullabaloo
In the land of the bounding kangaroo.

AH SID, when a bee by mistake he got,
Found "um Melican butterfly velly much hot."

So the Melican man and the Cornstalk bold
Soon found PING-WING was too hot to hold,
And, despite his patience and power of work,
PING-WING isn't wanted too near New York.

The Congress found that the Pieman's Son
Had much better keep to his own Canton;
That his shifty fingers and saffron skin
Might suit Hong-Kong or might fit Pekin,
Or any abode near the Chinese Wall;
But were not wanted in 'Frisco at all.

Though PING-WING toiled, and was meek and mild,

Chinese cheap labourers domiciled
Twixt the Pacific and the Atlantic
Were quickly driving the Yankee frantic.
Diplomacy saw it were clearly best
To speed PING-WING as a parting guest.

But PING-WING, the Pieman's Son,
Is a dogged critter not easily done.

The wild West wanted his neck in the noose
Of "Heads I win, (pig) tails you lose."
But the Treaty shaped that wish to gratify,
Celestial cuteness refused to ratify.

So Senator SCOTT he ups, and he,
Like BILL NYE, "goes for that Henthen Chinese."

The Western World for the issue waits,
But all about the Pacific Coast States
You may hear men singing of Chinese crime
To this newest shape of a Nursery Rhyme:—

"PING-WING, the Pieman's Son,
Was a troublesome cuss from far Canton.
He laboured hard, and he lived on rice,
But his tricks were dark, and his tastes not nice.
He burnt the Convention, and then said he,
'Me wonder whar dat Treaty be!'"

"DOUBLING."

In the case of WOODWORTH v. SUGDEN,
reported last Saturday, Mr. Justice DENMAN
is reported to have asked—

"Is Mr. SUGDEN advertised to appear at both
Theatres to-morrow night?
Mr. Bramwell Davis. Yes."

What a wonderful man! What a marvellous being in whose weird existence the laws of time and space are annihilated, and the powers of the Chancery Division have actually to be invoked in order to restrain Mr. SUGDEN from appearing in two places at once!



THE "IRREPRESSIBLE CHINEE"!

"PING-WING, THE PIEMAN'S SON,
WAS A TROUBLESOME CUSS FROM FAR CANTON.
HE LABOURED HARD, AND HE LIVED ON RICE,
BUT HIS TRICKS WERE DARK, AND HIS TASTES NOT NICE.
HE BURNT THE CONVENTION, AND THEN SAID HE,
'ME WONDER WHAR DAT TREATY BE!'"—*American Nursery Rhyme revised.*

PLAY-TIME AT THE HAYMARKET.

Nor by any means a model of construction, conventional in its dialogue and action, with scarcely a line worth remembering, with only a glimmer of comedy-humour here and there in the characters of



Dance of the Victim Master and Demon Butler, as (it ought to be) performed at the T.R. Haymarket.

of *Lady Betty* and old *Seabrook*, and with one strong dash of misplaced burlesque melodrama in the character of the Demon Butler, whose part is considerably damaged by the absence of topical song and dance, à la LESLIE, as *Jonathan Wild*—with all these defects, and in spite of them, *Captain Swift* is, in itself, a Drama of powerful dramatic interest, and so admirably acted all round, that it holds an audience enthralled from the rise to the fall of the Curtain. The story

is clearly told, and the acting is excellent—herein is the open secret of its success, for success it must have already achieved. Occasionally marred by some conventional melodramatic starts—false starts—which with melodramatic asides of the old-fashioned “Ha! that face!” or, “Ha! that voice!” “Strange!” “’Tis he!” pattern,—wrongly supposed to be necessary for emphasising “a situation,”—Mr. BEERBOHM TREE’s *Wilding*, alias *Captain Swift*, is a very fine performance. Certainly, the touching and impressive scene of the farewell in the last Act could not possibly be better rendered than it is by Mr. and Mrs. BEERBOHM TREE; indeed, the latter I have never yet seen to so great advantage. I do not think Mrs. TREE ever succeeds in her “make-up” for the stage,—too white, I should say. But to find fault is easy, to suggest the improvement is difficult. There is a great natural charm in Mrs. TREE’s impersonation of the otherwise conventional character of a love-sick, romantic young lady. The faults of this part are the author’s; its virtues the actress’s.

LADY MONCKTON is heart and soul in the very trying part of Mrs. *Seabrook*. She seems to be oblivious of the audience, and actually to be the character she impersonates. The art is less completely concealed than in that exceptionally finished performance of hers as the wife of *Jim the Penman*. But this again is the author’s fault.

As I consider it all round, I must own that I do not remember ever having seen a piece so lifted above the commonplace and conventional by the talent of the actors, as is this play of *Captain Swift*. There is a jarring note in the scene in Act III., between *Wilding* and Mrs. *Seabrook*, and it is this:—the audience share with Mrs. *Seabrook* the knowledge that she is *Wilding*’s mother. *Wilding* is in ignorance of the fact; so that when Mrs. *Seabrook* makes affectionate advances towards him, the unscrupulous Bushranger would see in this what *Captain Hawkley* saw in Mrs. *Sternhold*’s affection for him; that is, additional profit and safety out of this middle-aged woman’s vanity. The audience, undoubtedly, must take this view of the scene, and so, when Mrs. *Seabrook* sits on the sofa, and says, in a comparatively light and airy tone, “Come and sit beside me,” there is a titter through the house just at a critical moment when the scene, which requires the most delicate handling by the actors, without any help from the author, can least bear it. I fancy both Mr. TREE and Lady MONCKTON will agree with me on this point.

Melodramatic music played throughout the dialogue of this same great scene in Act III. is, emphatically, a mistake; it interrupts the action, and distracts the attention, tires the audience, and hence it happens that the charming song of Mrs. TREE’s, subsequently “heard without,” which should be so effective, becomes an anticlimax. This Act should have ended with the exit of *Wilding*, which should have been simultaneous with the last note of the song, and the fall of the Curtain. The letter-reading is another anti-climax.

MISS LESLIE attempts too much with the very common-place and, for her, very poor and ungenial part of *Lady Staunton*, who, after all, is a mere type of the “confidante” or “Charles his friend,” in petticoats. In make-up, Mr. TREE, Mr. MACKLIN, and Mr. KEMBLE are perfect.

Having naturally alluded to *Captain Hawkley*, I would ask why adapt the well-worn business of the cigar-lighting from *Still Waters run Deep*? It was highly effective in the scene between *John Mildmay*

and *Captain Hawkley*; it is singularly pointless in an analogous scene between Mr. *Gardiner* and *Captain Swift*.

Since Mr. TOOLE made *The Butler* a popular character on the stage, there has been a run on butlers. Nowadays, no piece is perfect without a butler in it of some sort, comic, tragic, melodramatic, or demoniac. It is this last type that Mr. C. HADDON CHAMBERS has selected for his play of *Captain Swift*. Mr. HADDON must have had butler on the brain,—can he affirm that he Haddon’t?—as the grotesque demoniac character has so little to do with the essence of the plot, that he may be at once set down as superfluous. This Superfluous Demon Butler, as impersonated by Mr. BROOKFIELD with genuine burlesque melodramatic humour, just gives the necessary comic relief to the play. When *Captain Swift* is heard making a bag of himself in September by blowing out his brains off the stage, it is a pity that the comic countryman Detective (new type, created and patented by Mr. CHARLES ALLAN), and the helpless old Fozzie, capably represented by Mr. KEMBLE (another version of *Brother Potter*, also from *Still Waters*), should not have descended all together by a trap licensed to hold three comfortably, with the Superfluous Demon Butler standing over them; and perhaps, if there were room in the trap for four, I should add *Lady Betty* to the group.

The Demon Butler, who is made up rather after one of the acrobatic GIRAUDS, disappoints every one by not sliding over the tables and chairs as a genuine GIRAUD would certainly have done. He is, as I have said, Superfluous; all the use he can be put to is to help the Detective, and, as far as that goes, the Detective, “from information received,” could get on just as well, even better, without him. Unless the Demon Butler has a prologue, an *entr’acte* topical song and dance, and an epilogue, with final disappearance down a trap-door, he will always be “superfluous” as long as *Captain Swift* shall run, which ought to be, and I sincerely hope will be, for many hundred nights. When the inevitable Country Company go on tour with *Captain Swift*, the superfluous Demon Butler might be played without words by a clever pantomimist, and called the “Dumb Waiter.” This would be at once economical and effective. Every lover of good acting should go and see *Captain Swift*, on the recommendation of JACK IN THE PRIVATE BOX.

ALDERMANO ITALIANO.

At the Guildhall. Prosecution by the National Vigilance Society for publishing Boccaccio’s “Decameron.”

“The book,” said Mr. AVORY for the defence, “had been in publication for over 400 years, and at the present time there were three copies of the work in the English language in the Guildhall Library, and about 200 in the British Museum.” Mr. Alderman PHILLIPS, who had previously mentioned that he had read *The Decameron*, both in Italian and English, said he did not intend to send this case for trial, because he did not for a moment believe that a jury would convict. The case was then dismissed.”—*Daily Telegraph*.

Rather a change from what would probably have happened some forty years ago, in the good old days of JOHN LEECH’S and DICKY DOYLE’S Aldermen, when there were Corporations within the Great Corporation; when no Alderman could have been alluded to physically as a No-body, when Wenison was their Wittles, and Tuttle was their only soup, and like *Sir John Falstaff*, they “babbled,” not of “green fields,” but of “green fat.” In those good old days, had this case come before Mr. Alderman and Sheriff GUZZLER (of the firm of BOOZER, SWILLY AND GUZZLER, Portsoken Ward), the report might have been on this wise:—

Alderman. Eh? D. CAMERON? DONALD CAMERON, of course. Counsel (explaining). The *Decameron* of BOCCACCIO, your Worship. Alderman. Ah! I didn’t catch his title—DONALD CAMERON of Book—what was it? There’s a CAMERON of Loch Something, and there’s a CAMERON in the Ward, a most respectable Councillor and Vintner.

Counsel (further explaining). No, Mr. Alderman, this is a Book. Alderman. A Book?—eh? Oh, not Book. Book? DONALD CAMERON, of Bookcadgers, did you say?

And so forth. And then the publisher would have been fined, and the editions confiscated. And now, “on a *changement de cela*,” as the Belgian LORD MAYOR would say, and be immediately understood by more than one decorated Deputy. Did the prosecution of the ZOLA translations come before Alderman PHILLIPS? No doubt he has put his knowledge of the French language to as good a purpose as he has his proficiency in Italian. Pity that he didn’t have the opportunity of saying, “I’ve read all these in the—ahem—in the original French (*applause in Court, immediately suppressed by the usher*), and I really do not think that a jury, who couldn’t possibly possess my educational advantages, ought to have a chance of convicting,—as I am sure they will, if I send the case for trial.”

That’s the sort of Alderman and Sheriff. “Sheriff thou art, and shalt be more hereafter!” All hail, Future Lord Mayor! The expiring Mayoralty wants a few little Italian olives, just to give it some fillips.



MARRIAGE EVIDENTLY NOT A FAILURE.

Joan (to Darby, who is getting stout). "LET ME TIE IT FOR YOU, DARLING."

A SERIOUS QUESTION.

Is it not within the bounds of probability that to the highly-coloured pictorial advertisements to be seen on almost all the hoardings in London, vividly representing sensational scenes of murder, exhibited as "the great attractions" of certain dramas, the public may be to a certain extent indebted for the horrible crimes in Whitechapel? We say it most seriously;—imagine the effect of these gigantic pictures of violence and assassination by knife and pistol on the morbid imagination of unbalanced mind. These hideous picture-posters are a blot on our civilisation, and a disgrace to the Drama.

LEGISLATIVE WORK AND WAGES.

IN proof that the "Payment of Members," if now legalised, would be no novelty, "SCACCARIUS" sends the *Times* the subjoined extract from the Exchequer records during the period of the "Long Parliament":—

"Received by mee, JOHN MERRICK, Knt. of THOMAS FPAULCONBRIDGE, Esq., Receiver Genl. of the Revenue, the some of fiftie twoe for my weekly allowance of fower pounds as a Member of the Comone House of Parliamt due for one quarter of a yeere ended at Michas, last 1645. By warrant from the Committee dated 25th of October 1645. I say received £52.

"JO. MERRICK."

It were superfluous to observe that Mr. MERRICK could not even spell his own name, merely because he appears to have spelt it in different ways. Even the Divine WILLIAMS himself did that. But suppose the Legislature were in these days to decree the award of pay to Honourable Members of the House of Commons for their attendance in Parliament, and required them to give a receipt for the money, wouldn't it be more than possible that some of the "Representatives of Labour" (to whom wages might be an object) would pretty nearly reproduce the deviations from the Dictionary remarkable in the foregoing transcript? A man's a man for a' that. Of course, a good deal depends on how much "a" that" might be. And an able but unlettered politician would need hardly declare, as the principal character in some old farce, when taxed with his orthography, used to say,— "It isn't the orthography that I care about, but it's that dashed spelling."

REPORTED BY G. ONE-RNE M-EG-N, OR "THE OTHER G. O. M."—"Mr. G." has enjoyed some uncommonly deep-sea-fishing sport in the recess, with Sprats to catch Wales.

"SOCIALISM AND TIGHT-LACING" are incompatible, morally. For the Socialist theory tends to the loosening of all bonds.

THE WOLF AT OUR DOOR.

A Morality from Norse Mythology.

[In the Norse Mythology, the Wolf Fenris (Crime), rages for food in the precincts of Asgard. Ultimately, the Sword-god Tyr, loaded Fenris with the chain Gleipner, and thrust a sharp sword into his mouth, to prevent him biting more. Thus, says the legend, is Crime, which threatens to corrupt the human race, bound by the apparently slight fetters of Law, and as the power of the Wolf was broken by the Sword, that of Crime is kept under by the awards of Justice.]

WANTED a Gleipner! 'Tis very plain
That the Wolf's abroad and has slipped his chain;
For the ruthless red-fanged savage,
In square, in street, and in sordid slum,
Strikes Justice helpless, and terror dumb
With his cruel unchecked ravage.
Law and Order? The catch-word slips
With ease complacent from canteing lips.
The Law that Labour's last mite exacts,
The Order that silence for sorrow enacts,
These claim the world's solicitude;
For Property's timorous, Wealth would tread
In peace and quiet its wine-press red,
And Culture shrinks with a querulous dread
From violence and vicissitude;
But Law alert at the poor man's hearth
And Order that giveth the humblest rest,
Are these high matters the soul to vex
Of Statesman Y Z, or Policeman X.?

Could Tyr the Sword-god from Asgard come
To a West-end waste or an East-end slum,
Could he take a stroll when the night falls dark
Through Poverty's pleasure or People's park,
What would the Norse-god say? Why this.
"It is fearfully clear that the Wolf Fenris,
As erst in Asgard olden,
Is 'waked by the moon and wants something to eat!'"
True the Law, in blue, is about on his beat,
But the echo far of his falling feet
At the distant end of the dusky street,
The Wolf doth but embolden.
His jaws are wide, and his teeth are white,
His eye is watchful, his tread is light,
The keen curst creature, a hideous sight!

Alone, or hungrily herded.
His play his death, and his life is prey.
Nay, bold from custom he braves the day,
In the silent waste or the narrow way,
And snatches sudden what'er may stray
Beyond reach of the weapon wherewith—they say—
Law's vigilant guard is girded.

That Wolf, in faith, hath a shifting face:
Hunger and lust you may ever trace,
And blood-greedy red and ruthless.

But now 'tis a visage of youth; anon
The brute-boy's beetling scowl is gone,
And you shudder and shrink as you look upon
Hag-age, hell-eyed, and toothless.

Nothing of harpy or gruesome ghoul,
That fiction shapes in its visions foul,
Naught of fiendish in form or glance
Dreamed in the broodings of wild romance,
Ever took horror of eviler shape.
Gorgon's rival, Chimæra's ape,

This Protean wolf-maw'd creature.
Sullen and sinister ruffian now,
Anon with a wanton yet womanly brow,
Again the monster doth mop and mow

With childish form and feature;
Yet wolfish ever, and wolf all through,
This new Fenris of an Asgard new.
But in sage in ermine, or man in blue,
We scarce discover the Sword-god true,

Our Wolf to seize and shackle.
The "Underground People,"—so it is said,—
Prepared a chain for their Thing of Dread,
Which, "small and slight as a silken thread,"
Was strong as steel, and heavy as lead,
Which gagged the maw, and which stayed the tread
Of the Fenris Wolf. Wake Tyr from the dead,
Our lupine foe to tackle!

Our "Underground People," whom we expect
To—Tyr would laugh at the word!—"detect,"

OUR JAPANNERIES. No. 15.



CROSSING THE CHANNEL.

For all their mystery, somehow fail
To follow the slot, or to track the trail
Of the Protean Wolf, or his steps restrain;
With the slight but terrible Gleipner chain;
Or, to thrust athwart his merciless maw,
The sharp, strong sword of unfailing Law.

THE COMING WINTER.—We hope no City
Speculator has yet come across this advertise-
ment in the *York Herald* of Sept. 4, 1888:—
"TO LET, 8 Acres of FOG, to be eaten with

Sheep." We have to swallow quite enough
Fog already without being forced to accept as
a daily dish, "Cold Shoulder of Mutton with
Fog Sauce!" Boat stewards could vary their
menu with "Chops of the Channel and Sea-
fog pie."

NEW NURSERY RHYME.

(Not Sung at the late Eisteddfod.)

TAFFY was a Welshman,
GLADDY was a chief;

GLADDY went to TAFFY's house,
To give his tongue relief.
GLADDY, when in TAFFY's house,
Thought himself at home;
But TAFFY, fearing party rouse,
With him picked a bone.
GLADDY went to TAFFY's house,
And his say he said;
But oh! he needed all his nous,
Two zealotries to wed.

"SHE-THAT-UGHT-NOT-TO-BE-PLAYED!"

A Story of Gloomy Gaiety.

PART I.—Led by the Nose.

I HAVE agreed to write down my terrible experiences. A will stronger than my own desires it. I can but obey. If I could, I would refuse. For I had hoped to have done for ever with the novelist who revels in gore. Moreover, I have quite forgotten the incidents of the particular book that has been "dramatised by permission," and then "re-written and adapted" by an author, a stage



"She-that-must-be-obeyed."

manager, and a lady with the sometimes frequently-reiterated name of CLO. My memory is a blank, save that I have a feeling of gentle pain, as I indistinctly recall a prosy leader-spouting sorceress, who, to the best of my recollection, before dying turned into a monkey, and a man who was called HOLLY, to give opportunities for the perpetration of mild puns upon his name, and a terrible bore, called JON. Ah, yes, I remember the last! A nightmare, a horrible nightmare!—feebly humorous, insipid beyond conception, stupid to the last degree! And was I to see all this? Oh, horror! Led by the nose!

PART II.—Heard through the Years.

Let me quickly get through my task. I was in the Temple of the Drama devoted to this fearsome work. I saw around me faces that I had seen before. In a large box, apparently inconveniently crowded, sat, or rather perambulated, a pale person in a *pince-nez*, who seemed to take the greatest possible interest in the proceedings. This pale person in the *pince-nez* fairly fascinated me, and, when I was weary of looking at the stage (and I confess I was often, very often weary), I fixed my gaze upon him. And then a wonderful thing happened. Whenever I glanced at him, whatever might have been the provocation—however dull and prosaic and profitless may have been the dialogue,—I never found him asleep!

But to my task,—a bitter one. I saw before me the interior of a Palace, that somehow recalled to me *Nitocris* at Drury Lane. There was one striking article of furniture, a modern reading-desk, that seemingly had become petrified into stone for the occasion. Then I noticed a man called the Keeper of the Queen's Records, and those Records I discovered were three Deeds, looking with their seals about two thousand years younger than they were represented to be. Then a portly person appeared, dressed as an ancient Greek, save that his

arms were tattooed after a decidedly modern fashion. Then came a gorgeously appressed dame, who, from her proneness to spout without danger of interruption (in a tone that might mean a fortune to a curate reading the funeral service) what seemed to me to be lengthy leading articles on more or less interesting subjects, and from her fondness for, and power of keeping well in the limelight, I recognised as "the One who must be obeyed." And the lady in the limelight stabbed the ancient Greek with the modernly tattooed arms, and the Curtain fell for the first time. It would have been better for my peace of mind if the Curtain (so far as that evening was concerned) had fallen for ever! But no; I had to suffer for hours longer! Suffering to be heard through the years—heard through the years!

PART III.—Seen by the Eyes.

I was in HOLLY's Rooms at Cambridge. HOLLY, I found, wearing a maroon-hued velvet coat, and puce-coloured black-striped trousers! And then came the infliction of inflictions! Jon, the would-be comic servant! Oh, how hard it was to bear! How hard! Even now, I shiver and turn cold when I think of him! They were joined, these strange ones, by the ancient and portly Greek with the modernly tattooed arms. This last was now dressed in a rather horsey costume of the nineteenth century; and then a strange thing happened. Without contradiction he declared, in spite of his portliness and other appearances distinctly arguing to the contrary that he was only five-and-twenty! Then this trio examined a box, and in the boredom that followed, a feeble glimmer of recollection of having read something somewhere like it before floated through my weary mind. Then the trio got on a Dhow of peculiar construction, and there was a mutiny and the stage became very dark. Then a strange thing happened. The crew, seemingly with considerable exertion, pulled the ship to pieces, and then drew a carpet over the remains. And the carpet was violently agitated, and the trio reappeared in a boat, and in the distance was the painting of the head of a comic negro! And a sense of deep relief filled my soul as the Curtain descended and allowed me to see no more! Oh, the weariness of that which had been seen by the eyes—seen by the eyes!

PART IV.—Caught on the Cheek.

Then came several hours in the land of Kor. I have a recollection of a lady wearing white muslin and a serpent, who wandered about always, always, in the limelight. I fancy she must have spoken for a very long while. And the ancient and portly Greek in the horsey clothes and tattooed arms, he, too, seems to have had a great deal to say. And I recall to mind an old man who got a laugh by calling the person in the puce-coloured and black-striped trousers "a baboon." And I have a vision too of some mild dancing by a small and select *corps de ballet*. And then I have standing out distinctly in my mind the black shadow of the greatest bore of them all. Jon! Jon! Jon! Oh, the feeble "jokes," oh, the melancholy "wheezes!" And I know that there must have been several scenes, even if there were but little action. Stay, did I not see HOLLY dangling in mid air, supported by an iron wire attached to a hook? But my mind seems to have partly slumbered until I came to "The Cavern of the Fire of Life." Ah, I remember it well. It was an unusual cavern, and now and again there was a whistle that somehow or other recalled to me the joint forms of the stage-manager and the prompter, and then followed a rumbling noise attended by a puff of steam, that suggested to me a suburban laundry on a slack washing-day. And at length the lady (who, I gathered, had lived for more than two thousand years in the limelight), divested herself of most of her white muslin and all of her serpent, and disappeared in the fumes of the suburban laundry. And immediately there was some shouting, and a pleasantly-fat person in grey rags and a white wig staggered in from the wings and fell on the stage, and was soon hidden from view by the distinctly welcome Curtain. And there was applause. Then a young lady in a costume of masculine cut, walked across the stage, accompanied by an elderly gentleman. And more applause followed, and various members of the cast crossed the stage, inclusive of the lady of the limelight. And then a strange thing happened. The pale person in a *pince-nez*, in the apparently inconveniently crowded private-box, suddenly appeared in the front of the *loge* alone, and began to address us. He told us that he believed the piece we had just sat out with so much weary patience would "make, with a few alterations, an exceedingly fine play," and said something complimentary about the performance of the lady in the limelight. And this was the great comic effect of the evening! The speaker who thus praised the story I was told was the author of the story himself! Caught on the cheek! Caught on the cheek! "Caught on"—the cheek!

Doctrine v. Deed.

"*LAISSEZ-FAIRE!*" cries caustic BRAMWELL.
He can scourge a sumph or sham well;
But one law at least is there:
He can't yield to,—*Laissez-faire!*

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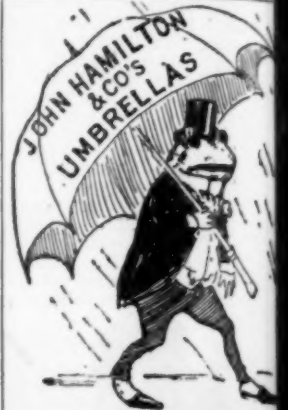
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